

REMARKS

By the present amendment, Applicant proposes to amend Claims 1, 8, 9 and 12, and cancel Claims 2, 5-7, 11, 13-14 and 19-20. Upon entry of the present amendment, Claims 1, 3, 4, 8-10, 12 and 15-18 will remain pending in the present application. Claims 1 and 15 are independent claims.

In the recent Office Action, the Examiner *finally* rejected Claims 1-4, 6, 7, 11, 13, 14, 19 and 20 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Szostek, taken alone, or in view of Tappenden, Thorp or Wolff. The Examiner allowed Claims 15-18, and indicated that Claims 5, 8-10 and 12 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

The cancellation of Claims 13-14 and 19-20 by the present amendment should serve to render the prior art rejections as to these claims moot. The Examiner's indication of allowable subject matter has been noted with appreciation. In this regard, Applicant has amended independent Claim 1 to incorporate the allowable subject matter of Claim 5 and intervening Claim 2. The incorporated claims have been canceled and dependency of each of Claims 8, 9 and 12 has been altered to now depend from Claim 1. Claims 6, 7 and 11 have been canceled to avoid claiming duplicate subject matter. For at least these reasons, Applicants respectfully submit that independent Claim, as amended, and corresponding dependent Claims 8, 9, 10 and 12 are allowable over the prior art of record.

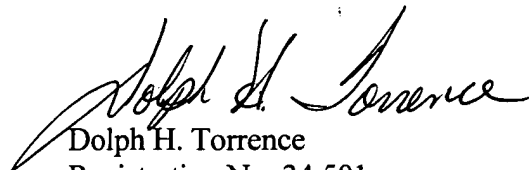
Application Serial No.: 10/698,428
Art Unit: 3651

Attorney Docket No. 23144.00
Confirmation No. 9410

Applicant respectfully submits that the proposed amendments made herein properly respond to the outstanding Final Rejection and represent a *bona fide* effort to satisfactorily conclude the prosecution of this application. Care has been exercised to ensure that no new matter has been introduced and that no new issues have been raised that would require further consideration or search. It is felt that no inordinate amount of time will be required on the part of the Examiner to review and consider this amendment. Accordingly, entry of the proposed amendment is respectfully requested.

For the foregoing reasons, Applicant respectfully submits that the present application is in condition for allowance. If such is not the case, the Examiner is requested to kindly contact the undersigned in an effort to satisfactorily conclude the prosecution of this application.

Respectfully submitted,


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